



Summer 2009

Crowning Moments newsletter

Brought to you by the King Street Center

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KING STREET CENTER

The mission of the King Street Center is to promote personal and social wellness through educational, recreational, and social programs.

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25 Years of Mentoring

One summer in the mid 1980s, the Burlington YMCA opened up its pool to low-income children on Friday afternoons. This was a wonderful opportunity for many King Street kids, who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity to go swimming indoors.

The catch was that most of the children didn't know how to swim. And the King Street staff, which then consisted of one paid employee and two interns, didn't have the manpower to supervise kids in the pool.

So they asked a few community volunteers to lend a hand.

It turned out that those volunteers thought that kids also needed the support of a caring adult outside of the pool. So they started taking them other places—to the bowling alley, the park, the movies.

Though they didn't realize it at the time, this small group of high school and college students had just become King Street's first mentors.

Mentoring was a new idea in Vermont back then, but was quickly embraced by many in the community. It was a natural fit for King Street, which had always relied heavily on volunteers to help children and families in need.

The program grew slowly at first, but several early champions of mentoring, including former board chair Rick Davis, kept the momentum going. By the early 1990s the program was large enough to warrant its own staff person. A young college grad by the name of Gabriella Tufo was hired to do the job.

Gabriella still manages our mentoring program today, which has grown to become one of the largest and most comprehensive programs in

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Supper and Science



Earlier this year, the King Street teens had the opportunity to take part in a new program created by retired Champlain Elementary School principal Nancy Zahniser.

Inspired by her own experiences with the Burlington Technical Center and seeking to introduce King Street teens to BTC's abundant resources, Zahniser established *Supper and Science*, a weekly program where middle school students meet to explore specific science content, related career opportunities, and to enjoy a meal together.

The program began with analyzing which jobs from the *U.S. News and World Report's* list of 30 Hot Careers required a scientific background. The answer: about 80%. In subsequent meetings, the teens visited BTC/BHS and performed blood-type experiments with Wendy King and Betsy McLane, investigated airplane engines with Rick Sylvester, explored dendrology with Brian Hoffman, and created a final quiz show

with Phil Mozeika. In addition, students studied the fundamentals of wind energy, touring the eco-friendly facilities of NRG Systems in Hinesburg with Barry King.

Mark McKinnon of the BTC Culinary Arts program and Burlington Food Service Director, Doug Davis, coordinated the delicious and nutritious suppers. Nimo Girreh, school liaison and interpreter joined the sessions as well, providing culinary and educational support. The series also benefitted from the support of Stephanie Phillips, Burlington Schools Curriculum Director.

Next year, a generous donation from the Henderson Foundation and Chittenden Bank ensures that the *Supper and Science* program will continue, and, with the addition of teens from the Sara Holbrook Community Center, the series' impact will be even stronger. Ideally, teens will return to the program yearly, pursuing studies that will lead to a career in the sciences.

If you would like to get involved, King Street currently seeks guest speakers, dinner sponsors, and new inspirations for next year's program. For more information, please contact Teen Futures Coordinator Jim Young at teenfutures@kingstreetyouth.org.



From the Director

Vicky

One of my favorite books as a child was *Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame. The characters' life revolved around the river. Ratty, a key character in the story, was passionate about "his" river. The rhythms of Ratty's life were like his river—always changing, yet always the same. I often think of Ratty and his river when people ask me about King Street. My response is often something akin to Ratty's—King Street is the same, yet changing all the while.

You'll notice some definite changes at King Street as you read this newsletter. The most obvious, of course, is that we dropped "youth" from our name to become simply King Street Center.

It's not because the youth have gone away—it's really quite the opposite. We're seeing more people pass through our doors than ever before. Young mothers with their babies, eager to learn English. Rambunctious preschoolers learning their letters and numbers. School-age kids playing tennis with Jake. Teenagers believing that they will go to college. Parents wanting a better life for themselves and their children. An awesome community of staff, volunteers, and donors who help make good things happen.

It is this larger community that comprises King Street Center. Children will always be our focus, but the success of our young people depends so much on the broader network of family and community that surrounds them. Our hope is that the name change reflects this reality—that we are here for all members of our community, and everyone has a role to play in helping children and families succeed.

So while our name and logo have changed, the fundamental ways in which we do our work remain the same:

- Our programs will continue to develop core life-building skills: academics, athletics, and social development.
- Our staff will always focus on long-term, integrated services that take into account the unique circumstances of each child and each family.
- Our mission will remain focused on nurturing the promise and possibilities of the most vulnerable members of our community, so that Burlington remains a great city to live, work, and play for everyone.

Like Ratty's river, King Street Center is evolving and progressing forward. Yet we continue to hold on to our convictions and all that we value as we care for children and families.



Mentor Moments

Ahmed and Steve were matched in January of 2009 in the *Just for Boys* mentoring program, where mentor pairs meet on-site weekly to take part in pre-planned group activities. Their friendship quickly took off, and at the conclusion of the spring series of *Just for Boys*, Ahmed and Steve moved into King Street's *Junior/Senior Buddy* program, in which mentor pairs meet weekly on their own to do activities in the community.

The two have now been meeting one-on-one for several months. As a newer match, Steve and Ahmed are using their time together to develop a good connection and consistent set of boundaries, find out about shared interests, and to show commitment to the mentoring match, all of which will help to build the foundation of a strong and lasting relationship.

For Ahmed, though, the most important part is having Steve in his life. Ahmed says that the reason he likes Steve is, "He's so fun, and he makes me happy."



Leopold Scholars Announced

2009 has been a fantastic year for the Leopold Scholarship Fund. This year marked the largest applicant pool the fund has seen to date and included former scholarship recipients, current high school seniors, and a King Street parent.

We are proud to announce the 2009 Leopold Scholars: Tenzin Dakpa (NECI), Jo Evans (Norwich University), Patrice Lumumba (Lyndon State College), Tenzin Sherab (Burlington College), and Joshua Bennett (UVM).

— from L to R: Vicky Smith, Cara Capparelli, Mary Welz of VSAC, Josh Bennett, Roxane Leopold

Meet OUR Youth



Rabecca age 9

Years at King Street: 6
School: Champlain Elementary
King Street Activities: Basketball, football, soccer, art, dance at the Flynn, Junior/Senior Buddies, cooking, tennis
When I grow up I'll be: An astronaut
Why King Street is fun: Because we get to play new games and recycle stuff to make art.
What I've learned because of King Street: We can do homework and share glory and respect other people.



Dakpa age 18

Years at King Street: 9
School: BHS Class of '09, NECI in the fall!
King Street Activities: Kids Lemonade, Relay team, Homework Club, tennis, Afterschool program volunteer, college club, and Kids' Café.
Favorite achievement at King Street: Working here after growing up in the programs.
Why King Street is important to me: It helps kids stay out of trouble. They help you with college, homework, and making good choices. And, it's fun.

When it Rains, We Pour: Lemonade 2009



Melissa and Brandon

Sales were down, but spirits were up at the Kid's Lemonade Stand this year. Soggy summer weather didn't stop our youth from squeezing the freshest citrus drinks in town to tourists and locals alike on the Church Street Marketplace.

New this year, several youth from the Sara Holbrook Community Center, our sister center across town, joined our teens to work the stand. When they weren't working, teens from both centers explored the great outdoors as part of SHCC's successful Adventure Camp program.

Many thanks to Seventh Generation and City Market, the teen staff, and everyone who dropped by the stand this year in support of the King Street kids!

25 Years of Mentoring continued

Vermont. It includes *the Junior-Senior Buddy program*, where mentors spend a few hours with a child each week participating in an activity that they both enjoy; *Each One Reach One*, where, in addition to a mentor, children are matched with a motivated high school or college student for one-on-one homework help; and *Just for Boys*, where male mentors meet as a group at King Street Center and enjoy a fun, pre-planned activity together.

A group of mentors have taken the program a step further and created the *King Street Talent Extravaganza*, where mentor pairs organize

and stage a major talent show at Contois Auditorium every spring. Now in its third year, the event has become a successful fundraiser that brings in several thousand dollars for King Street programs.

Kevin Greenblott, who founded the event in 2006, has been with his "little buddy" Will (now 20) for over twelve years. "You start with mentoring because you want to give something to the community," says Kevin, "but you stick with it because of what you get back in return."

Tennis in the Parks



While early morning dew is still heavy on the grass, you can hear Jake Agna's infectious banter with the kids. "Hey Jake! Do you have a racket for me?" "Hey, Jake, can we play top dog?" Hey Jake, did ya bring butterscotch Life Savers?"

There's nothing quite like Tennis in the Parks. For the fourth summer, Jake and his talented group of youth coaches provided free tennis instruction at two city parks – Roosevelt Park in the Old North End and Appletree Point Park located in the New North End of Burlington.

Each park has its own unique feel and personality. At "Rosie," as the park is affectionately known, Vietnamese girls take on the Russian Turks. At Appletree, tennis is the game of choice for the many Bosnian families that come out every day.

English might not be the native tongue of many of our summer tennis players, but the game itself provides a universal language from which everyone learns. By summer's end, every child knows the name of every drill, and most importantly, each other.

Tennis in the Parks taught about 100 kids from all over the city how to play tennis this year. We are grateful to Gary Rogers and the Burlington Parks and Recreation Department and many generous community donors for their ongoing support of this program.



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**Congratulations to
Carol Hinkel**
winner of this year's
U.S. Open
tennis raffle!



**Check out King Street's
Blogs**

www.kingstreetvoices.blogspot.com
www.kingstreetteens.blogspot.com

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New Name, New Look... New Website!

King Street Center has a new look and a new website, www.kingstreetcenter.org, thanks to the generosity of Marketing Partners, Inc., a Burlington-based marketing, advertising, and public relations firm.

Marketing Partners "adopted" the Center last fall after a chance meeting between former King Street board member Mike Burak and Marketing Partners co-founder Pat Heffernan. "Because we are located a few blocks from the Center, we see the children, families and flurry of activity at the center on a daily basis," says Pat. "When we met with the King Street staff to talk about donating our services, we saw a real opportunity to make the Center shine and help the rest of our community learn more about the amazing work they do."

Visit us online at www.kingstreetcenter.org.